



LOCAL 90

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS

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REPRESENTATIVE

Testimony of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

Veterans' Affairs Committee

**SB 212 AAC Implementation Of The Recommendations Of The Military Occupational
Specialty Task Force**

HB 5299 AAC The Findings Of The Military Occupational Specialty Task Force

February 25th, 2014

To Senator Leone, Representative Hennessey, and members of the Veterans Committee, I am writing on behalf of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) to offer comments on SB 212 and HB 5299, which are two nearly identical bills which propose statutory changes to implement recommendations made by the Military Occupational Licensing Task Force.

The IBEW represents nearly 6,000 licensed electrical journeymen and apprentices in the State of Connecticut. We take pride in our training and apprenticeship programs and feel workplace safety and promoting an educated, prepared workforce is of utmost importance. We support the veterans in our state and have nothing but the highest respect for those who serve in the armed forces and put their lives aside to protect those of others.

The IBEW fully supports the intent of both SB 212 and HB 5299, as they look to provide a simplified pathway for veterans looking for employment when they return from military service. We sympathize with veterans who struggle to find work and understand there is a need to promote hiring practices that encourage the employment of veterans. In an attempt to pursue that goal, the Military Occupational Licensing Task Force proposed streamlining the process for veterans who need an electrical, plumbing or HVAC license to pursue employment in the building trades. Section 4 of both SB 212 and HB 5299 propose to implement this recommendation by allowing the Commissioner of the Department of Consumer Protection to waive the licensing exam for veterans pursuing any license under Chapter 393 of the CT General Statutes. SB 212 would also allow the Commissioner to waive the application and licensing fees established under this chapter.

As stated before, the IBEW strongly supports efforts to encourage employment of veterans, and in that vein we support the provision in SB 212 to waive application and licensing fees. Those fees can be significant to a person currently unemployed. We would also support any proposal to allow fees to be waived for necessary in-class training at the vocational technical schools. However, we would like the committee to take caution when considering the proposal in both bills to allow waiving the licensing exam. We understand individuals with military service are

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likely to have had a great deal of experience with a variety of crafts during their time of service, and many are likely over-qualified for much of the work that would be offered to them here at home. Having said that, electrical work and other construction related trades can be very dangerous if a person does not have the appropriate training and experience in that specific field.

We support efforts to streamline the process leading up to taking the exam, but we would feel more comfortable maintaining that anyone looking to perform electrical work has taken the exam and displayed clearly that they have sufficient knowledge of the craft. We express the same concern for the provision in section 7 of bills 212 and 5299 which would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to push other state agencies to allow for temporary occupational licenses for spouses of veterans.

We would also like to mention that the Occupational Licensing division within DCP and the Occupational Licensing Examining Boards work often on a case by case basis to address situations such as this and they are able already to make certain exceptions when appropriate. We feel that system has been working as it should and we are not sure the legislation is necessary for that reason.

Thank you for your time and consideration to this issue.

Sincerely,

Sean Daly
President
IBEW Local 90